

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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O P 091218Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1493
INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ISLAMABAD 4722

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--PARA SIX)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. AS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PNA SPUTTER ALONG, BHUTTO
HAS TWO OPTIONS AS HE CONSIDERS HOW TO DEFUSE THE
EXPLOSIVE TENSION IN THE COUNTRY. HE COULD SEIZE THE
INITIATIVE AND MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH
THE OPPOSITION LEADING TO NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.
IF HE CHOOSES THIS ROAD, HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE ABOUT FOUR
MONTHS DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD TO PLAN HIS CAMPAIGN
AND MAKE ALL EFFORTS POSSIBLE TO HELP ENSURE VICTORY FOR THE
PPP. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IF NEW ELECTIONS ARE HELD
THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD STAND BACK AND LET THE DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS TAKE ITS COURSE. HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT
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THE PROCESS TO INCREASE THE PPP'S CHANCES OF WINNING. THIS
TIME, HOWEVER, LEARNING FROM THE PAST, HE WOULD TRY TO BE
MORE SUBTLE AND SOPHISTICATED IN JUST HOW HE DOES INFLUENCE
THE RESULTS. UNDER THIS SCENARIO, THE PM WOULD DEPEND ON
DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE PNA LEADERSHIP, THE INCOMPETENCE

OF SEVERAL OF THE LEADERS, AND HIS OWN POLITICAL ACUMEN AND PROVEN CAMPAIGNING TALENTS TO MAKE A COME-BACK AND EMERGE FROM NEW ELECTIONS WITH RENEWED LEGITIMACY AND A POPULAR MANDATE. HE WILL ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY ATTEMPT TO FASHION AN ELECTION PLATFORM MORE APPEALING TO THE ELECTORATE, PERHAPS CONTINUING HIS ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN AND MIXING IT WITH DTRIDENT NATIONALISM. THE POSSIBILITY OF A SPLIT IN THE OPPOSITION WHEN IT CONTESTS THE ELECTIONS WOULD ALSO BE APPEARLING TO THE PM.

6. THERE ARE SEVERAL DRAWBACK TO THIS APPROACH. ONE IS THAT NO MATTER HOW MASTERFULLY HE ATTEMPTS TO ORCHESTRATE NEW ELECTIONS THERE IS ALWAYS THE DANGER, IF THE PPP WINS, HE WILL EMERGE FROM THE ELECTIONS IN A POSITION SIMILAR TO THE ONE HE WAS IN ON MARCH 7 - FACING CHARGES OF RIGGING AND NON-ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESULTS BY THE OPPOSITION. THESE CHARGES WOULD BE FED BY POPULAR SUSPICION THAT SINCE HE RIGGED ONE ELECTION HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO RIG A SECOND. ONE COULD ARGUE THAT IF BHUTTO WON THE ELECTIONS, THIS WOULD BE THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME, ALTHOUGH THE CHARGES WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN IF BHUTTO COULD POINT TO AN ARMY AND JUDICIARY GUARANTEE OF THE ELECTION PROCESS. ALSO, WITH ACTIVE ARMY INVOLVEMENT IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO MANIPULATE THE ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH BHUTTO COULD INFLUENCE THE RESULTS ON THE MARGIN. HE CAN, THROUGH THE LOCAL BUREAUCRACY, HARASS OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, TAKE ADMINISTRATIVELY PUNATIVE MEASURES AGAINST THEM, AND USE THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND ITS RESOURCES GENERALLY TO SUPPORT THE PPP CAMPAIGN. ONE CAN QUESTION HOWEVER, THE CUREAUCRACY'S WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST BHUTTO A SECOND TIME AND THEREBY JEOPARDIZE ITS POSITION IF THE PM LOSES. THE PNA ITSELF IS SO
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DIVIDED IT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO AGREE ON A SETTLEMENT, EVEN IF THE PRIME MINISTER DOES WANT AN AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION. THERE ARE FOCES WITHIN THE OPPOSITION, GROUPED WE UNDERSTAND AROUND MUFTI MAHMUD, WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PM. THERE ARE OTHERS, SUCH AS ASGHAR KHAN, WHO ARE INTENT ON REMOVING THE PM FROM OFFICE AND DO NOT TRUST HIM TO IMPLEMENT ANY AGREEMENT.

7. A SECOND OPTION FOR THE PM IS TO PLAY THE OPPOSITION ALONG, PRETEND TO BE INTERESTED IN TALKS, AND HOPE WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME THAT THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT WILL LOSE ITS STEAM, THE PEOPLE WILL TIRE OF AGITATION AND THE NATION WILL RETURN TO NORMAL. UNDER THIS OPTION, THE PM WILL TALK ABOUT HOW HE REALLY WANTS A SETTLEMENT WITH THE PNA (LATEST WORD PASSED BY THE PNA IS THAT HE HAS PROMISED MUFTI, ALTHOUGH NOT IN WRITING, THAT HE WILL HOLD NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS) BUT WILL NOT TAKE ANY STEPS THAT WILL LEAD HIM IRREVOCABLY IN THAT DIRECTION. HE

WOULD ALSO TELL THE MILITARY THAT HE IS SINCERELY TRYING
TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION BUT IT IS
UNCOOPERATIVE.

8. IF BHUTTO FOLLOWS THIS PLAN, A SETTLEMENT WITH THE
PNA AND ELECTIONS WOULD BE MUCH FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD
AND WOULD BE SOMETHING TO TURN TO ONLY AS A LAST POLITICAL
PLOY. HE WOULD FIRST CONTINUE TO GO THROUGH HIS CHECKLIST
OF POLITICAL DELAYING TACTICS AND ATTEMPT TO PUT TOGETHER
NEW AND DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS TO KEEP THE OPPOSITION OFF
BALANCE AND HIM IN POWER. A RECENT EXCELLENT EXAMPLE
OF SUCH TACTICS WAS THE USE OF PAKISTAN'S ISLAMIC BROTHERS
TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE. AT BHUTTO'S
REQUEST, THE SAUDIES, LIBYANS, YASSIR ARAFAT AND THE UAE
FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE ENCOURAGED THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE
WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, THE
SAUDIS VIRTUALLY FORCED THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE BY ASSERTING
THE TRUE MUSLIMS HAD AN OBLIGATION TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES -
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A COMPELLING ARGUMENT FROM THE CITADEL OF ISLAM TO THE
CLAIMANTS OF THE TRUE FAITH IN PAKISTAN. THE ARAB'S
STATEMENTS OF INTEREST IN A SETTLEMENT WERE SPRINKLED WITH
WORDS OF SUPPORT FOR PAKISTAN AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ISLAMABAD 4722

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

9. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF LOOKING FOR NEW AND EFFECTIVE TACTICS IS BHUTTO'S TURN IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA TO ANTI-AMERICANISM. WE BELIEVE BHUTTO DECIDED TO EMBARK ON HIS ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN TO DEFLECT HEAT FROM HIMSELF AND TO FOCUS PEOPLES' ATTENTION ELSEWHERE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. WE THINK THE TACTIC HAS BEEN AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. PAKISTANIS BELIEVE IN INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND THE GREAT MAJORITY ACCEPT AS GOSPEL THAT BIG POWERS ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL DESTINY. ALTHOUGH MILITARY OFFICERS AND MANY OF OUR MIDDLE CLASS CONTACTS MAY NOT BELIEVE THE CHARGES - AND NUMEROUS PAKISTANI FRIENDS ARE TELLING US THEY KNOW THEY ARE NOT TRUE - THE CHARGE HAS FOUND A CONFIDENTIAL

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BELIEVING AUDIENCE AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS MAJORITY WILL FIND THE CONSPIRACY THEORY RELEVANT AS THEY STACK IT UP AGAINST THEIR GRIEVANCES AGAINST BHUTTO, IS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION.

10. THIS DELAYING STRATEGY HAS THE OBVIOUS DISADVANTAGE THAT IT IS NOT A LONG-TERM ANSWER. CONTINUAL MANEUVERING AGAINST A VACILLATING OPPOSITION CAN EXTEND BHUTTO'S INCUMBENCY MONTHS AND PERHAPS EVEN LONGER. YET IT DOES NOT AFFORD PAKISTAN A PERMANENT ANSWER, AND THE DAMAGE TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FABRIC WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE.

11. BASED ON BHUTTO'S PAST ACTIONS AND HIS INTEREST IN THE SHORT-TERM POLITICAL QUICK FIX AS OPPOSED TO LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS, WE THINK HE WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE EVERY APPEARANCE OF WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE OPPOSITION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DELAYING. THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT AGREE TO HOLD NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WHEN HIS BACK WAS TO THE WALL AND HE SEEMED IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF FALLING TWO WEEKS AGO. ONE CAN WELL ASK WHY SHOULD HE MAKE THE OFFER NOW. IF BHUTTO CONTINUES TO DELAY NEGOTIATIONS AND DRAWS ON HIS REPERTORY OF POLITICAL TRICKS, PAKISTAN WOULD WELL FACE AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY.

12. THE FINAL ARBITER REMAINS THE ARMY, BUT AS REPORTED

EARLIER, THERE ARE STILL SUBSTANTIAL REASONS
KEEPING THE MILITARY FROM MOVING AGAINST BHUTTO. (WE NOTE
THAT IN LAHORE ON THE 7TH THE PUNJABI ARMY DID FIRE ON
PUNJABIS AND KILLED SEVERAL. A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS
HOW LONG WILL THE ARMY CONTINUE TO BE WILLING TO DO SO.)
HOWEVER, IT IS AN OPEN QUESTION HOW LONG THE MILITARY WILL
CONTINUE
TO SUPPORT THE PRIME MINISTER EVEN IF THE
POLITICAL SITUATION DOES NOT WORSEN. THE TIME MAY WELL
COME WHEN THE ARMY WILL DECIDE THAT CONTINUED ECONOMIC
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STAGNATION, POLITICAL UNVDRTAINTY, EROSION OF ITS
REPUTATION, CONCERN ABOUT DETRACTING FROM THEIR PRIMARY
MISSION, AND THE NEED TO PROP UP THE PRIME MINISTER IS
SO CONTRARY TO ITS OWN AND ITS PERCEPTION OF PAKISTAN'S
INTERESTS IT WILL TAKE STEPS TO REMOVE HIM FROM POWER.

13. PAKISTAN THEREFORE FACES THE PROSPECT OF A
CONTINUING STRUGGLE BETWEEN A SKILLFUL PRIME MINISTER
WHO IS TENACIOUSLY CLINGING TO POWER AND A DISOWGANIZED
OPPOSITION ATTEMPTING TO FIND WAYS TO TAPE THE POPULAR
DISCONTENT. TO PROVE IT IS NOT IMPOTENT, THE PNA WILL
HAVE TO CONTINUE CALLING POEPL E INTO THE STREETS AS IT
DID ON THE 6TH IN DEFIANCE OF MARTIAL LAW. THE GOVERNMENT
CAN ONLY RESPOND WITH FORCE AND REIMPOSITION OF CURFEWS,
THEREBY HIGHLIGHTING BHUTTO'S ABILITY TO RULE PAKISTAN
BUT HIS INABILITY TO GOVERN. THE DENOUEMENT OF THE
POLITICAL DRAMA COULD WELL BE LONG, DRAWN OUT AND
INCREASINGLY DESTRUCTIVE FOR THE COUNTRY, OR IT COULD
COME SUDDENTLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY WITH A MILITARY REAS-
SESSMENT OF ITS POSITION.
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